



Embassy of the United States of America

American Citizen Services
24 Grosvenor Square
London, W1A 2LQ

MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS IN ENGLAND AND WALES

American citizens coming to the United Kingdom to marry British citizens or persons settled here, or to register as Civil Partners, generally require entry clearance from UK authorities. Clearance must be obtained in advance of arrival.

If you are in the United States and need more information, consult the website of the British Embassy in Washington, D.C., at www.britain-info.org. If you are outside the United States, but not in the United Kingdom, consult www.ukvisas.gov.uk. If you are already in the United Kingdom, see www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk.

Failure to comply with the requirement for entry clearance may result in refusal of entry to the United Kingdom.

Civil (Non-Religious) Marriages: In general, for a civil marriage, both contracting parties must:

- observe the statutory residence requirements (see below);
- be at least 16 years old;
- obtain parental consent in writing if either party is under age 18, unless one is a widow or widower;
- if previously married, produce evidence that they are currently free to marry (for example, the original or a certified copy of the former spouse's death certificate or of the divorce decree); and
- arrange for two witnesses to be present at the marriage and to sign the Marriage Register.

People subject to immigration control who wish to marry in the United Kingdom must:

- hold entry clearance as a fiancé/e or marriage visitor, or
- hold a Home Office certificate of approval, or
- be a person with settled status in the United Kingdom (e.g. indefinite leave to remain).

Who regulates civil marriages in England and Wales? The Registrar's Office for each district. To find the nearest Registrar, look under "Registration of Births, Deaths, and Marriages" in the telephone directory, or call Directory Assistance (192). The Registrar takes the Notice of Marriage (the license application), issues the certificate, and conducts the ceremony. For most visiting Americans, the most centrally located Registrar's Office is at Westminster Council House, Marylebone Road, London SW1E 6QP (Tel: 020-7641-1161).

How do I obtain a certificate? There is a seven-day residence requirement for both parties; on the eighth day, both give "Notice of Intent to Marry" to the local Registrar's Office for the district in which they have been staying. A further 15-day waiting period must lapse before the marriage may take place. It is preferable that both parties give notice at the same time. Each party also is required to declare nationality and provide evidence of identification.

Religious marriages in England and Wales: Church of England authorities advise that marriage in an Anglican church between two foreigners or between a foreigner and a British citizen should be by ecclesiastical license arranged through the vicar of the church in which they wish to be married. For information on marriage in accordance with Anglican rites, consult The Faculty Office, 1 The Sanctuary, London SW1P 3JS (Tel: 020-7222-5381). Protestants of other denominations or Quakers should consult the clergyman or governing body of the respective denomination. Roman Catholic authorities advise that parties should give at least six weeks' notice to the parish priest prior to the marriage to allow time for instruction, collection of documents, publication of banns, and other formalities. If the parties do not reside in the parish, they will need letters from the parish priests of their home parishes giving permission for the celebration of the marriage elsewhere. Jewish marriages may be performed under the auspices of a registered synagogue and entered in the synagogue's marriage register. Further information may be obtained from the Office of the Chief Rabbi, 735 High Road, London N12 0US (Tel: 020-8343-8989). For religions not mentioned, please contact the appropriate governing authority.

Can a marriage take place anywhere? Marriages can be performed by a Registrar at any location, provided the venue is licensed, approved, and registered for the purpose of marriage by the local government authority. Licensed venues may include hotels, public houses, and stately homes. For a fee, the Registrar from the district where you reside may perform the marriage in another district's licensed venue. Fees vary according to the time and date you wish the marriage to take place. For a list of venues and fees, contact the nearest Registrar.

Is a marriage performed in the United Kingdom valid in the United States? In general, regardless of the nationality or religion of the persons married, marriages legally performed in the United Kingdom are also legally valid in the United States.

What is the role of the Embassy? The Embassy has no role in the process, other than to administer oaths on documents as a notary service (please see http://london.usembassy.gov/cons_new/acs/scs/notary.html for further information on notary services). American diplomatic and consular officers may not perform marriages or serve as witnesses. Marriages may not take place at the Embassy.

Is citizenship affected by marriage? No. An American citizen marrying a foreign national does not lose American citizenship, nor does he/she automatically acquire British citizenship if marrying a British citizen. Similarly, a foreign national does NOT acquire American citizenship simply by marriage to an American citizen. After marriage, an American citizen may amend his/her surname to reflect his/her married name by presenting his/her U.S. passport and a certified copy of the marriage certificate to a consular official at the Embassy. For more information, see our website at http://london.usembassy.gov/cons_new/acs/passports/index.html. A foreign national spouse who intends to reside in the United States must obtain a U.S. immigrant visa prior to entering the United States. For information, consult our website, <http://london.usembassy.gov>.

Civil Partnerships: The UK Civil Partnership Act 2004 came into operation on December 5, 2005, and enables a same-sex couple to register as civil partners of each other. A civil partnership can be registered in England and Wales in a register office or in approved premises. For more information, see <http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>. Note that, as for marriage, entry clearance must be obtained in advance of arrival from UK authorities. Please refer to the links above.

Under U.S. law (the Defense of Marriage Act 1996), a civil partnership registration cannot be used as the basis for an immediate name change in a U.S. passport, nor can it be used as the basis for a U.S. immigration benefit. For more information on changing the name in your U.S. passport, see http://london.usembassy.gov/cons_new/acs/passports/amendindex.html. For more information related to immigration, see the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service's website at <http://www.uscis.gov/propub/ProPubVAP.jsp?dockkey=e379332fb990f9c0d5dc72f610bed207>.

For information on marriage and civil partnerships in other parts of the United Kingdom or the Irish Republic, apply to:

<u>Scotland</u>	<u>Northern Ireland</u>	<u>Irish Republic</u>
Registrar General	Registrar General	General Register Office
New Register House	49-55 Chichester Street	8/11 Lombard Street
Edinburgh EH1 3YT	Belfast BT1 4HL	East
Tel: 013-1334-0380	Tel: 028-9025-2000	Dublin 2
		Tel: 353-1-635-4000